# Nutritious Nettles

Name _____ Date _____

Text 1

## **Nutritious Nettles:** Nature's Natural Remedy for Health and Healing

### Did you know?

**Nettles** are rich in nutrients, a natural detoxifier, an aid to digestion and a great source of vitamins A, C and K.

They can support the immune system, promote healthy skin, support joint health, reduce inflammation, boost hair health, relieve constipation, provide energy, create environmental benefits, and support sustainability.

**An Ancient and Versatile Plant**

Nettles, often seen as nuisance weeds, are actually packed with nutrients and health benefits.

With a history of use in traditional medicine, nettles can be beneficial in various ways from supporting overall health to being a valuable addition to your diet.

Nettles have been used for centuries in Britain as a food source, medicine, textile material, and even fertiliser.

Nettles are one of Britain's most valuable wild plants, offering a nutrient-rich food source, powerful medicinal properties, and practical uses in textiles and gardening.

Despite their sting, they have been treasured for centuries and are still widely foraged today.

**Foraging & Drying Nettles 🌿 How to Forage Nettles Safely**

Nettles are easy to find and incredibly useful but proper harvesting ensures the best taste and safety.

✅ **Best Time to Harvest:** spring and early summer (March – June). Young, tender nettle tops are best.

Older nettles (after flowering) can develop gritty calcium crystals (oxalates), which can irritate the kidneys.

✅ **Where to find them:** Hedgerows, woodland edges, riverbanks and gardens.

**Avoid areas near roads, polluted sites, or places treated with pesticides.**

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## Text 1 questions

### Comprehension

1. Write a sentence to summarise the benefits of nettles in daily life. Use your own words as far as possible.

_____

_____

2. List four uses for nettles.

a)_____ b)_____

c)_____ d)_____

3. True or false? The whole nettle plant is good to eat. T | F

4. Which vitamin is commonly found in nettles?
   a) Vitamin A
   b) Vitamin B
   c) Vitamin D

5. Why can it be said that nettles are "one of Britain's most valuable wild plants"? Write your response in your own words.

_____

_____

_____

6. Name one defence mechanism that nettles have. Explain your answer.

_____

_____

_____

7. True or false? Nettles can be used in textiles. T | F

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## Purpose and organisation

8. The text is:
   a) an article
   b) a newsletter
   c) a story
   d) a web page

9. What is the purpose of the text? Choose the most likely answer.
   a) To advise
   b) To persuade
   c) To inform
   d) To describe

10. Explain why the text has been split into sections.

_____

_____

11. List two organisational features used in the text.

a_____ b_____

## Spelling and vocabulary

12. Find the spelling mistakes (4) in the text below and write the correct spellings.

They can support the emmune system, promote healthy skin, support joint health and reduce inflamation, boost hair health, releive constipation, provide energy, create enviromental benefits and support sustainability.

*You may use a dictionary for questions 13 and 14.*

13. What does the word **versatile** mean as it is used in the text?

_____

14. Find a word or phrase to replace **treasured** that keeps the same meaning.

**Despite their sting, they have been <u>treasured</u> for centuries**

_____

# Nutritious Nettles

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Text 2

## Nettles (*Urtica dioica*) as a Food Source

**History**: used as a food and medicine for centuries, dating back to Anglo-Saxon times.
**Appearance & Taste**: the young leaves have a rich, spinach-like flavour when cooked.
**Unique Feature**: despite their sting, nettles are highly nutritious.
**Uses**: can be made into soups, teas, or even beer.

**Nettles have a slightly earthy, spinach-like flavour and can be used in many ways.**

Nettle tea

Delicious and refreshing.

Nettle Soup

A hearty, nutritious soup.

## Some culinary uses

Nettle Soup – A traditional dish across the UK, particularly in rural areas.
Steamed or Sautéed Nettles – Similar to spinach, great as a side dish.
Nettle Tea – steep dried or fresh leaves in hot water, used for its health benefits.
Nettle Beer – An old-fashioned fermented drink, similar to ginger beer.
Nettle Pesto – Blended with garlic, nuts, and cheese like a basil pesto alternative.
Baking – Added to bread, scones, or pasta dough for a nutrient boost
**Caution: wear gloves when handling fresh nettles to avoid stings.** Cooking, drying, or blending nettles removes the sting, making them safe to eat.

**Nettle leaves and adverse reactions**

Nettle leaves and stems are covered in tiny, hair-like needles containing histamine, acetylcholine, and formic acid, which cause a burning rash when touched.

Dock leaves (a traditional remedy) or crushed plantain leaves can soothe the sting. Washing with soap and cold water helps reduce irritation and you should avoid scratching, as it can worsen the reaction.

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| Try some of these delicious nettle recipes. | |
|---|---|
| Traditional Nettle Soup 🍲 A hearty, nutritious soup packed with vitamins. | Instructions: |
| Ingredients:<br>✓ 1 onion, chopped<br>✓ 2 cloves of garlic, minced<br>✓ 1 large potato, diced<br>✓ 1 tbsp butter or olive oil<br>✓ 4 cups of fresh young nettle leaves (washed, with stalks removed)<br>✓ 1 litre of vegetable or chicken stock<br>✓ Salt and pepper to taste<br>✓ A dash of nutmeg (optional)<br>✓ A swirl of cream (optional) | 1. Heat butter/oil in a pot, then sauté onion and garlic until soft.<br>2. Add diced potato and stock. Simmer for 10-15 minutes until the potato is soft.<br>3. Add nettle leaves and cook for 2-3 minutes until wilted.<br>4. Blend until smooth, season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg.<br>5. Serve with a swirl of cream and crusty bread. |
| Nettle Tea 🍵 A simple, refreshing, and detoxifying tea. | Instructions: |
| Ingredients:<br>✓ 1 cup of fresh nettle leaves (or 1 tbsp dried nettles)<br>✓ 2 cups of boiling water<br>✓ Honey or lemon (optional) | 1. Rinse fresh nettle leaves<br>2. Pour boiling water over the leaves and let steep for 5-10 minutes.<br>3. Strain, add honey or lemon, and enjoy! |
| Nettle Beer 🍺 A lightly alcoholic, herbal brew that dates back centuries. | Instructions: |
| Ingredients:<br>✓ 1 kg of fresh nettle tops<br>✓ 4 litres of water<br>✓ 500g of sugar<br>✓ Juice of 2 lemons<br>✓ ½ tsp cream of tartar<br>✓ 7g of brewing yeast | 1. Boil the nettles in water for 30 minutes, then strain.<br>2. Add sugar, lemon juice, and cream of tartar to the warm liquid.<br>3. Let cool to blood temperature (about 37°C), then stir in the yeast.<br>4. Cover and leave for 3-4 days to ferment.<br>5. Strain, bottle, and leave for another week before drinking. |
| Nettle & Cheese Scones 🧀 A tasty, savoury treat infused with the goodness of nettles. | Instructions: |
| Ingredients:<br>✓ 2 cups of self-raising flour<br>✓ ½ tsp salt<br>✓ 50g of butter (cubed)<br>✓ ½ cup of grated cheese (cheddar or parmesan)<br>✓ ½ cup of blanched, chopped nettles<br>✓ ¾ cup of milk<br>✓ 1 egg (for egg wash, optional) | 1. Preheat oven to 200°C (400°F).<br>2. Rub butter into the flour and salt until it resembles breadcrumbs.<br>3. Stir in cheese and chopped nettles.<br>4. Gradually add milk and mix into a soft dough.<br>5. Roll out to 2cm thickness, cut into rounds, and place on a baking tray.<br>6. Brush with beaten egg and bake for 15-18 minutes until golden. |

**Precautions:** Who should avoid nettles?

- Pregnant Women. Nettle tea can stimulate the uterus and may increase the risk of miscarriage.
- People on blood thinners or diuretics. Nettles can enhance the effects, leading to complications.
- Allergy-prone individuals. Some people may experience mild allergic reactions.

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## Text 2 questions

1. Describe the best part of the nettle to use for cooking.

_____

_____

_____

2. What do nettles taste like?

_____

3. What precautions need to be taken when collecting the nettles?
*(Write in complete sentences.)*

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Why are bullet points and numbered lists used in the table of recipes? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. List at least four warnings found within the text.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

6. Name a plant that can be used to soothe the sting from nettles.

_____

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Text 3

## Nettles in Textiles

Nettles are not just for food and medicine. They have other uses too:

- Making fabric – Before cotton was common, people used nettle fibres to make clothes.
- Dyeing fabric – Nettle leaves make a green dye, and the roots make a yellow dye.

Nettle plant with nettle fibre, string and yarn.
*Image Source: https://www.craftcourses.com/courses/nettle-fibre-workshop*

Nettles have been used to make fabric for thousands of years. Before cotton became widely available, people used nettle fibres to create strong and durable textiles.

Nettle fabric was commonly used in Europe and Asia and was valued for its strength and ability to keep people warm in winter and cool in summer.

### How Nettle Fibres Are Processed

1. Harvesting – Nettle stalks are collected in late summer when the plant has grown tall and strong.
2. Retting – The stalks are soaked in water to break down the outer layers, making it easier to separate the fibres from the woody stem.
3. Drying and Breaking – Once the fibres are loosened, they are dried and then beaten to remove unwanted parts of the plant.
4. Combing and Spinning – The cleaned fibres are combed to align them and then spun into yarn, ready to be woven into fabric.

### Characteristics of Nettle Fabric

- Strong and Durable – Nettle fibres are as strong as flax and can last for many years.
- Breathable and Comfortable – The fabric allows air to pass through, keeping the body at a comfortable temperature.
- Eco-Friendly – Unlike cotton, nettles grow naturally without needing pesticides and use less water.
- Softens over Time – Though initially rough, nettle fabric becomes softer with each wash.

### Modern Uses of Nettle Fabric

With growing interest in sustainable fashion, nettle textiles are making a comeback. Some designers and eco-friendly brands are now using nettle fibres to create clothing, home textiles, and accessories.

In addition, nettles are being blended with cotton, wool, and silk to enhance their qualities while reducing the environmental impact of textile production.

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## Text 3 questions

1. What colour dyes can be made from nettles?

   _____

2. Summarise how nettle fibres are processed to make fabric.

   _____

   _____

3. Why are nettles considered to be a sustainable and eco-friendly alternative for other textiles?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. What are two characteristics of nettle fabric?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. How is nettle fabric being used in modern fashion?

   _____

   _____

6. Add the missing punctuation to this sentence.

   *despite having a nasty sting nettles can be used as food medicine and fabric*

   _____

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## Writing task

You want to start your own business making nettle-based products. You know there are grants available in your local area for new enterprises. Write to your local council asking for information about ways they can support your start-up business.

You could ask about:

- Financial support
- Business premises
- Permissions (to set up a home business)
- Anything else you can think of.

Write between **300 – 500** words (depends on your level).
Make sure you use suitable vocabulary and the correct layout for a formal letter.
E.g. name, address, greeting, etc.

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## Speaking and listening task – presentation

You have been invited to present your ideas to a local environmental group to discuss your business idea.

You should:

- Explain why and how nettle products are safe, sustainable and eco-friendly.
- Support your points with facts and persuade them to support your endeavour.
- Be prepared to answer questions after the presentation.